

Council says pressing need to provide accommodation means land can be used

Fury at plan to let gipsy stay on Green Belt

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PLANS to allow a gipsy's home to permanently stay on Green Belt land look set to be approved by the council, to the outrage of local residents.

Officers have recommended planning permission be granted for gipsy William Eastwood's site, which comprises a mobile home, day room and stables, in Beads Hall Lane, Pilgrims Hatch.

But residents fear the recommendation could open the door to further encampments.

The area has already been earmarked by Brentwood council as one of five possible sites for the 15 traveller pitches the Government has told the authority it must have in place by 2011.

A consultation – or a decision – on which of these sites will be used has yet to take place.

Because of this, the council has suggested the plans be given temporary permission for three years as they say this would not prejudice the outcome of the decision concerning the 15 pitches.



SWISH: Gipsy William Eastwood's home, complete with gates

The planning officer's comments state: "It is considered that the current unmet need for pitches and the present inclusion of the application site as one of the council's preferred gipsy and traveller sites constitutes a very special circumstance which justifies granting planning permission in the Green Belt."

However, residents – of which 10 have lodged formal objections with the council – suggest the application should not be considered until after a decision has been made on where to site the 15 pitches.

Others suggest that if Mr East-

wood's site is allowed, Beads Hall Lane should be taken off the list of five proposed traveller sites.

The mobile home has been on the site for around eight years and, up until July 1, had temporary planning permission.

Neighbours are also distressed the development could be allowed on Green Belt land.

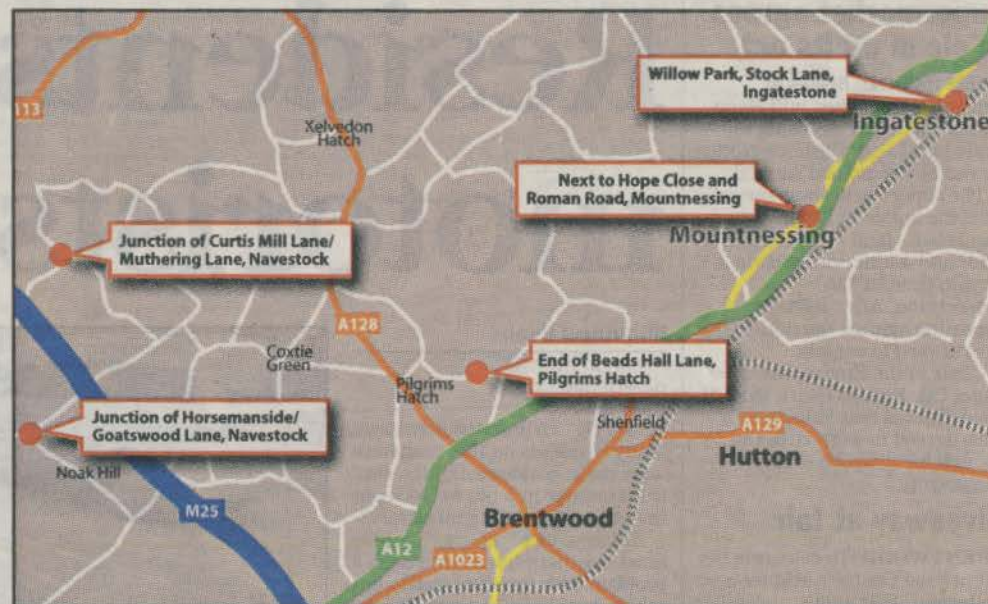
Cllr Barry Aspinell, the ward council councillor for the area, said:

"What we are talking about here is allowing an individual to claim gipsy status to allow him to build a permanent home on the Green Belt, while you and I would be turned down."

"You can see why the residents are not happy about that."

One Beads Hall Lane resident, who did not want to be named, added: "I think we are all of one accord that this man has not given us any trouble and we don't mind the development, providing they take the wording of 'gipsy site' off there."

The plans will either now be agreed under delegated powers or called in front of Brentwood council's planning committee for debate.



OPTIONS: The five locations that are being put forward to take the traveller pitches

Final word on borough's traveller pitches

THE third and final consultation about where traveller pitches should be placed around the borough is set to begin next month, according to the council.

The consultation will focus on which of the five sites currently recommended, should hold the 15 permanent and legal traveller pitches the Government has instructed Brentwood council to build in the borough.

The five sites are Cottage Garden in Beads Hall Lane, Pilgrims Hatch; Willow Park in Stock Lane, Ingatestone; land next to Hope Close and Roman Road in Mountnessing; Hope Farm in Horsemanside on the junction of Horsemanside and

Goatswood Lane in Navestock; and Treetops in Curtis Mill Lane, Navestock.

It all began when Government body the East of England Regional Assembly told Brentwood council it must supply 15 permanent traveller pitches by 2011.

Caravans

A pitch is defined as an area of land where a gipsy or traveller household can reside – typically it includes a building, parking spaces and between one and three caravans.

Brentwood Borough Council then launched a consultation with residents about where they thought these pitches should be

placed in the borough and 18 sites were suggested, including William Hunter Way and a former school playing field.

Opinions on these 18 sites were then sought in a second consultation between May and July 2008 which received 2,300 responses.

Following this consultation, five sites were chosen and a third consultation, next month, will canvas opinion on where the 15 pitches should finally go.

It was originally intended the consultation would be reported back to the council in October 2009, before the plans were submitted to the Secretary of State for approval, but it is not clear if this deadline is still in place.